

Complaints Management Policy

Purpose

Campaspe Cohuna Local Learning and Employment Network Inc (CCLLEN) is committed to providing a safe, accessible, fair and responsive complaints management system for children, young people, families, staff, volunteers, contractors, partners and members of the community.

CCLLEN welcomes feedback and complaints as an opportunity to improve services, programs, systems and practices. Complaints will be managed fairly, respectfully, confidentially and in a timely manner.

CCLLEN recognises the rights of children and young people to express their views, raise concerns and make complaints about matters affecting them. Complaints relating to children and young people will be managed in a child-centred, trauma-informed and culturally safe manner, with the safety and wellbeing of children and young people being the primary consideration.

The Child Safety Complaints and Concerns Reporting Process contained in Appendix A forms part of this policy and should be read in conjunction with the Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, Incident Management Policy and any applicable Reportable Conduct obligations.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, Committee of Management, contractors, consultants and representatives of CCLLEN. It applies to complaints made by:

- Children and young people
- Parents, carers and families
- Employees and volunteers
- Service participants
- Partner organisations
- Contractors
- Members of the community

It covers complaints concerning:

- Service delivery
- Programs and activities
- Employees, volunteers and contractors
- Committee of Management members
- Organisational decisions
- Child safety and wellbeing concerns
- Discrimination, harassment or bullying
- Accessibility concerns
- Complaints handling processes
- Any conduct impacting upon the safety, wellbeing or participation of children and young people.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action, decision, service, behaviour, policy or process of CCLLEN, its employees, volunteers, contractors or representatives, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Guiding Principles

CCLLEN will ensure complaints are:

- Accessible
- Child-safe
- Culturally safe
- Confidential
- Responsive
- Fair and impartial
- Timely
- Trauma-informed where appropriate
- Continuously reviewed to improve service delivery

Complaints Made by or About Children and Young People

CCLLEN recognises that children and young people have the right to raise concerns and make complaints about their experiences, participation and safety. Information about how to make a complaint will be communicated to children and young people in age-appropriate, accessible and child-friendly formats to ensure they understand their rights and how to raise concerns safely.

Children and young people may make complaints:

- Directly
- Through a parent or carer
- Through an advocate
- Through a trusted adult
- Through another representative acting on their behalf

CCLLEN will ensure that children and young people:

- Are listened to and taken seriously
- Feel safe to speak up
- Are informed about what will happen next
- Receive support throughout the complaints process
- Are protected from victimisation or adverse consequences when raising concerns
- Are involved in decision-making appropriate to their age, maturity and capacity

Accessibility of the Complaints Process

CCLLEN is committed to ensuring that complaints processes are accessible to all people, including children and young people.

Support may include:

- Child-friendly information
- Plain English communication
- Verbal, written or alternative communication options
- Interpreter services
- Disability supports and adjustments
- Assistance from a support person or advocate
- Cultural support where required
- Flexible meeting arrangements
- Accessible complaint submission methods including phone, email, online or in person.

Child Safety Complaints

A child safety complaint may involve:

- Abuse or neglect
- Grooming behaviour
- Boundary violations
- Inappropriate communication
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Discrimination
- Unsafe practices
- Concerns regarding employees, volunteers or contractors
- Concerns involving another child or young person
- Any conduct that may place a child or young person at risk

Where a complaint involves child safety concerns, the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person will take precedence over all other considerations.

All child safety complaints and concerns will be managed in accordance with the Child Safety Complaints and Concern Reporting Process outlined in Appendix A, with the safety and wellbeing of children and young people remaining the primary consideration throughout the process.

Responding to Child Safety Concerns

Where there is an immediate risk to the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, emergency services and/or relevant statutory authorities will be contacted without delay and immediate protective actions will be taken.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern

Children, young people, parents, carers, employees, volunteers and members of the community may raise a child safety concern directly with CCLLEN. Child safety concerns may be reported to the Executive Officer, the designated Child Safety Officer, via the organisation's published child safety contact channels, or through the CCLLEN website. Information about how to report a child safety concern will be made publicly available and accessible to children and young people.

When a child safety concern or disclosure is received, CCLLEN personnel must:

- Listen calmly and respectfully
- Take the concern seriously
- Ensure immediate safety where required
- Record information accurately
- Report concerns promptly to the Executive Officer or designated Child Safety Officer
- Follow applicable mandatory reporting and Reportable Conduct obligations
- Maintain confidentiality in accordance with legislative requirements

CCLLEN personnel must not:

- Conduct their own investigation
- Promise complete confidentiality
- Ask leading questions
- Attempt to determine whether allegations are true or false

Confidentiality and Protection

CCLLEN will take all reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality and privacy of complainants and any other persons involved in a complaint, subject to legislative reporting obligations and the need to ensure child safety.

Individuals who make complaints in good faith will not be disadvantaged, victimised or subjected to adverse treatment because they have raised a concern or complaint.

Complaint Categories

General Complaints

Complaints regarding services, programs, communication, decisions or organisational processes.

Workplace Complaints

Complaints regarding employees, volunteers, contractors or workplace conduct.

Child Safety Complaints

Complaints involving actual or suspected harm, abuse, neglect, grooming or conduct affecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Anonymous Complaints

CCLLEN recognises that some individuals may wish to raise concerns anonymously. Anonymous complaints may be accepted and investigated where sufficient information is available to enable consideration of the issues raised.

While anonymous complaints will be assessed on their merits, the ability to investigate or provide an outcome may be limited where insufficient information is provided.

Complaint Management Process

CCLLEN will acknowledge receipt of complaints within five (5) business days where contact details have been provided and will endeavour to resolve complaints within thirty (30) calendar days. Where additional time is required, the complainant will be advised of the reason for the delay and provided with an updated timeframe.

Level 1: Early Resolution

- Immediate response by the receiving employee
- Aim to resolve at first point of contact
- Record outcomes

Level 2: Internal Review

- Formal assessment and investigation
- Conducted by an appropriate manager or Executive Officer
- Written outcome provided

Level 3: External Review

Where appropriate, complainants may seek review through an external body such as:

- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Victorian Ombudsman (where relevant)
- Social Services Regulator (where relevant)
- Other regulatory bodies

Record Keeping

All complaints, including child focused and child safety complaints, will be documented, monitored and retained in accordance with privacy, record management and child safety requirements.

Complaint data will be reviewed periodically to identify trends, risks, systemic issues and opportunities for improvement.

Appendix A: Child Safety Complaints and Concern Reporting Process

